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THE *REALPOLITIK* OF INFORMAL CITY GOVERNANCE

THE INTERPLAY OF POWERS IN MUMBAI'S UN-RECOGNIZED SETTLEMENTS

Enrico Michelutti and Harry Smith

ABSTRACT:

While international agencies continue to promote 'good governance' as a precondition for development in the rapidly urbanizing world, the state and local institutions work within 'real' governance frameworks which include different, un-official forms of connection with community institutions, particularly in the so-called informal city. Local public actors build underlying networks, seeking territorial control and establishment of favourable power relations, following rationalities which diverge from those embedded in formal policies, including 'strategies and tactics' where 'informal' settlements (legal and illegal) are 'used' as sources of political and economic support in exchange for some form of security. Taking a 'new institutionalist' approach, and based on in-depth fieldwork in three 'informal' settlements, the paper explores governance structures and practices in the case of Mumbai's un-recognized settlements, established after 1995 and considered 'illegal' by public authorities. The three case study settlements include different sizes, people's places of origin, religions, processes of formation and political structures. These lead to a plurality of institutional arrangements which shape the web of relations between actors inside and outside the community and the governance of socio-spatial and planning issues. Despite the legal status of these settlements, which entails residents' exclusion from services and evictions, economic and political powers within (and in relation with) the Municipality are interested in governing the 'illegal city'. In the face of formal un-recognition (and exclusion practices), community institutions develop negotiations/agreements with intermediate institutions to consolidate informal relations with the Municipality, as a coping strategy. The paper provides an understanding of actors' rationalities and the interplay of powers in the context of 'real' urban politics. It concludes that the interests the actors have in the existing governance processes raise questions about the appropriateness and scope for implementation of theoretical 'good governance' approaches, and suggests that improvement of living conditions in these areas requires not only official acknowledgment of the settlements as physical entities, but cognizance of the real governance mechanisms in operation and approaches that address these.

KEY WORDS:

Urban governance; Power relations; Community development; Planning strategies; Informal settlements

INTRODUCTION

The complexity of the current dynamics in the city of the South and the difficulties public authorities have in managing recently urbanized areas raise questions about the actual connections between theory and practice in urban governance. An example of the fracture between the official theories and

policies promoted by the international agencies and the real practices developed by public authorities at State and local levels emerges in the un-recognized areas of Mumbai. Despite the exclusion from formal urban policies, the ‘illegal city’ is a centre of interests for economic and political powers at the city scale and for institutions operating at the community scale, some of which are community-based informal institutions, and others are (often externally-based) community-controlling institutions engaged in criminal activity – with ‘institutions’ here being understood in the ‘new institutionalist’ conceptualisation of mutually dependent organisations and mental models, with related practices. Actors operating at the local level build underlying negotiations with public authorities and define new frameworks for governance.

This work seeks to highlight the discrepancy between the approaches to urban governance advocated by international agencies and actual governance practices in un-recognized slum areas of Mumbai, applying a ‘new institutionalist’ approach. It shows governance mechanisms in three un-recognized settlements of the city. The analysis of the case studies allows the definition of two different frameworks in governance, sustained by specific rationalities of planning. These are determined by power relations which shape the interactions of informal community and criminal organizations with public authorities. The paper concludes evidencing the importance of the cognizance of such governance mechanisms for the real improvement of the living conditions of un-recognized slum dwellers.

URBAN GOVERNANCE: THE GAPS BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

THE EVOLUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES’ GOVERNANCE AGENDA

For decades now the international discourse on how to address the issues emerging from rapid urban growth in the Global South has been dominated by the normative declarations and publications of key international agencies such as the United Nations (specifically the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements – UNCHS, followed later by UN-Habitat) and the World Bank. These agencies have called for ‘good governance’ and the use of ‘best practice’ as a way to transfer specific governance models. The underlying assumption is that understanding of the sectoral causes of issues such as lack of land for shelter, poor housing conditions etc, combined with knowledge of successful experiences elsewhere, can be the basis for improved governance and hence improved urban living conditions. Though this may happen in some cases, generally this position ‘ignores a *realpolitik* where individuals, institutions and governments tend to act for their own perceived benefit first, and perhaps are prepared to act in more voluntarist and wider beneficial ways secondly, if at all’ (Jenkins et al, 2007: 184).

Since the 1980s such normative exhortation has revolved around the concept of ‘enablement’, which in the UNCHS version focused initially more on ‘community enablement’, while the World Bank’s stated approach was to ‘enable markets’. As well as being advocated in several reports (UNCHS, 1987, 1996, 2001, 2003, among others), ‘enabling strategies’ were at the centre of the United Nations’ approach which culminated in the Habitat Agenda of 1996 and underpinned the recommended ways of achieving the Millennium Development Goals set at the beginning of the century. In parallel, the World Bank’s approach to ‘enabling markets’ was made explicit in key reports on urban development

and housing at the beginning of the 1990s (World Bank, 1991, 1993) and formed a basis for initiatives such as the Urban Management Programme in the 1980s/90s and land titling projects more recently.

Key to such enabling strategies is the concept of governance, which was made central as well to donor activity such as that of the UK's Department for International Development (DfID) and other international aid agencies. In the eyes of these international agencies, 'good governance' is characterised by inclusion and representation of all groups in urban society; accountability, integrity and transparency of local government actions; a capacity to fulfil public responsibilities, with knowledge, skills, resources, and procedures that draw on partnerships (World Bank, 2000: 49). A leading role for planning systems in achieving good governance in terms of urban development has been recognised again more recently, with the positive and proactive role of the state through such systems, as well as participatory planning, being recognised as necessary (UN-Habitat, 2009: viii-ix & 24-25). However, the assumptions about neutral, interest-free and willing attitudes among 'stakeholders' still appear to underlie such approaches. An examination of governance practices in the informal areas of Mumbai reveal a very different reality, where different political and economic powers are at play, and where any prospect of improvement of living conditions necessarily involves such urban power groups – e.g. community organizations of different types, political actors, interest groups within the public authorities, etc.

AN APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING ACTUAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND PRACTICES IN URBAN AREAS

Governance mechanisms depend on the institutional frameworks which characterize the relationships between society and territory. Several schools of thought¹ have explored these relations focusing on institutions as their main interpretative tool. In governance analysis, which has been dominated by the normative dimension embedded in decision-makers' interests, the institutional focus has privileged the nature, role and actions of organizations as criteria to approach the institutional dimension in urban governance. Institutional studies have contributed to exploring the complexities in the relations between organizations and the institutional overlapping characterizing the current forms of governance of the territory (Healey, 2007). At this stage, also in the institutional dimension of urban governance and in addition to political studies on the city, the question of power has risen as a key issue in the debate.

Though currently a complete conceptualization of power in urban governance is still lacking, some authors have started to change the conventional institutional approaches, focusing on planning rationalities and power relations, which are deeply connected to actors' mental models (Flyvbjerg, 1998). This approach allowed the analysis of 'strategies and tactics' between actors-organizations, as well as to explore the criteria determining these subjects' actions. The study of the cultural background and the complex fabric of socio-economic and political elements building the different institutional set-ups at work in urban governance enabled the authors to go beyond the pure interplay between actors, enlarging the scope of conventional institutional approaches.

To analyze governance mechanisms in Mumbai's informal areas, a 'new-institutionalist' approach is applied. This approach, initially developed in economic studies, has been already used in other

¹ Among these, actor-network analyses focusing on organizations, regulation and normative approaches, social models of complexity theories, etc. (for a brief overview, see Michelutti, 2014).

domains of knowledge including urban development and planning (Jenkins, 1999). It includes an analysis of both the organizations and the mental models at work in the decision-making processes related to spatial and planning decisions. This approach enables the researcher to enlarge the scope of the analysis, considering the cultural context, the felt needs, the priority agenda and the rationalities of the actors engaged in the management of informal settlements at the community scale.

PUBLIC AUTHORITIES' GOVERNANCE PRACTICES IN MUMBAI'S SLUM AREAS

In Mumbai, the governance of the informal city has been increasingly associated to local public institutions in a process of decentralization of responsibilities, which has involved the relations between central government and the city since Independence (Masselos, 2007; Pinto, 2008). In the current scenario, characterized by a plurality of organizations in action², two main institutions are engaged in the governance and management of slum areas: the Municipality and the Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA). Public authorities' actions 'officially' only address the recognized ('notified') slums: the municipality works mainly to provide basic services, while the SRA is responsible for the process of 'redevelopment' (or resettlement).

The renewal of the informal areas is a crucial issue for Mumbai, where, considering only the so-called Greater Mumbai, 54% of the population, 8.6 millions of citizens, live in slums (Mehrotra et al., 2006: 10; UN, 2009: 2), approximately half of them in 'non-notified' settlements³ (Government of India, 2010: 32). In this context, in which housing and planning policies interface with economic-political interests, public authorities have to a large extent left the initiative in the hands of the private sector. Developers represent the main actor proposing redevelopment projects, which theoretically involve informal communities both as target/beneficiary and partner (Patel, Arputham, 2007). The SRA manages the administrative process, maintaining a role of control in the definition of projects. Privatization conditions the role of communities and the public sector in renewal processes, shaped by the private investors' interests and rationality of action. This should involve the participation of slum dwellers in the definition of projects and public authorities' choices in informal city governance, but actually construction companies have a great room for manoeuvre in controlling and directing the process.⁴

In Mumbai the legislation considers eligible for redevelopment only slums built before 1995. The more recent informal fabric is excluded, and not recognized ('non-notified') settlements become

² The fragmentation in governance and city planning, due to the overlapping of competences mainly at the Maharashtra State level, has an extended literature. During 1980s and 1990s, 12 State agencies were involved in urban management (Gadkari, 1992) and, in 2006, the Urban Design Research Institute (UDRI) identified 15 public authorities dealing with planning issues (Mehrotra et al., 2006). In recent years, and increasingly after the establishment of the SRA, public authorities' governance on informal areas has been simplified from an administrative point of view and some state agencies, such as the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Agency (MMRDA) or Mumbai Housing and Development Area Authority (MHADA), take a very marginal part in slum area governance.

³ The discussion regarding these data and how they fit with the situation in Mumbai remains open and depends on the sources that are used. In India 50% of slums are 'non-notified', in Maharashtra 45% (Government of India, 2010).

⁴ This process is evident for instance in the cases of Dharavi (Patel, Arputham, 2007) or in the dispute related to the new airport in the Andheri area.

‘illegal’. This process is not new in Mumbai: analogous cut-off dates characterized previous legislation on the informal city (slum dwellers had a right to be part of rehabilitation projects in the census or in electoral lists in 1976, for the Prime Minister Grant Project, and 1985, for the Slum Redevelopment Scheme). Currently the political proposal of moving the cut-off date for the informal areas to 2000⁵ is before the High Court. These elements show a gap between the State of Maharashtra and the Indian central government in terms of urban policies on slum areas (Michelutti, 2013). In 2010 the Ministry of Housing and Poverty Alleviation, seeking a ‘slum-free India’, proposed the Rajiv Awas Yojana, a central government programme where both ‘notified’ and ‘non-notified’ settlements are recognized and the logic of the cut-off date⁶ is substituted with a more inclusive approach. Despite this kind of attempts, in which however the passage between the legal and strategic planes to effective urban policies seems to be in progress, in Mumbai, the rationality of public authority remains tied to an excluding model.

Excluding policies, which have characterized urban governance in Mumbai and more generally in Maharashtra in the last few years, are deeply connected to the evolution of the local political context. The weakness, contradictions and internal fights of the political parties which have traditionally maintained a strong relation with the Indian Central Government (mainly the ‘Congress’), have opened new spaces for right wing and local extremist parties, bringing Mumbai and Maharashtra away from the political direction proposed by the Indian Central Government also for what concerns urban governance (in a deeper way in the informal city). Besides populist declarations, alluding to a new interest for disadvantage citizens and vulnerable urban areas, political parties (independently from their sets of values and ideologies) have supported economic powers and high classes, following an idea of Mumbai as a ‘World-class city’. In the 1990s and 2000s, the explosion of the tensions between Hindu and Muslim communities, strengthened by terrorist attacks, fostered policies of exclusion (Mehta, 2004). ‘Illegal’ settlements, where poor/low caste Hindu and Muslim communities are settled, have been identified as critical areas. Instead of promoting inclusion in such areas, decision-makers have found ‘answers’ in urban policies oriented to demolitions and evictions.

Despite its legal condition, the demolitions and evictions, the ‘illegal’ fabric continues to grow and respond to the housing demand of a vulnerable population. These dynamics entail the appearance of unofficial forms of governance for the ‘non-notified’ urban fabric. The emergence of new tactics and power relations determine alternative rationalities of action and decision-making processes for the ‘illegal’ city. Governance of the ‘non-notified’ settlements assumes its specificity not only in comparison with the formal city but also with the ‘notified’ informal settlements.

THREE CASES IN MUMBAI’S UN-RECOGNIZED URBAN FABRIC

To explore governance in the ‘illegal’ city, this paper considers three un-recognized settlements in Mumbai, which are characterized by diverse socio-cultural and habitat conditions. These include different sizes (from a ‘micro-community’ of 30 families to a complex settlement composed by thousands of households), people’s place of origin (coming from other states of India or from other Maharashtra’s cities), religion (Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist), processes of formation (occupation of municipal or state land or pavement in one or more periods) and political structures (based on

⁵ In very few cases projects have already used the cut-off date of 2000 in Maharashtra (Sabbaraman et al., 2012).

⁶ In the programme, the cut-off date is the date of survey of the slum.

community legitimized authorities or controlled by criminal organizations). These lead to a plurality of institutional arrangements which shape the web of relations between actors inside and outside the community and the governance of socio-spatial and planning issues.

Data was collected mainly through qualitative methods. Primary methods included in-depth interviews (with key informants inside and outside the case-study settlements, community leaders and slum dwellers) and direct observation⁷. These methods were focused on the collection of information regarding institutions, power relations and rationalities of planning at the community scale. The use of secondary methods concerned mainly the review of documents⁸ related to public authority planning policies and slum redevelopment at the city scale, which, with different degrees, had consequences on the case-study areas.

Analysis of the data collected in the three case study areas⁹ showed that spatial/planning decision-making processes link to communities through different actors:

- Community informal institutions (community councils, composed mainly of representatives of extended families; community leaders, who, despite being part of community organizations, represent a subject with a large degree of independence, recognized by slum dwellers; and ‘big men’, who defend the interest of part of slum dwellers but are not supported by the entire community);
- Extended families, the ‘base’ of community social fabric, consisting of groups of families usually settled in the area since the community formation;
- Political parties and NGOs, which operate mainly as intermediate institutions, between communities and public authorities (Michelutti, 2010);
- Criminal organizations¹⁰ (and the hierarchies of slum lords, mediators, etc.), which are part of the community social fabric and constitute the lower level of criminal networks at city scale.

⁷ A few participant observation exercises were conducted in Rafi Nagar 2 with the support of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences of Mumbai.

⁸ Life-oral histories, narrative inquiry and proxemics were used sporadically in getting information on specific issues or in contrasting un-clear information.

⁹ The research is built on a case study strategy seeking a context-dependent knowledge on the topic, which is deeply connected to the socio-cultural and the political-institutional environment of the city. Governance practices in the recently urbanized informal areas of Mumbai present a very nuanced reality, needing an intense observation to be explored: a case-study approach offers solutions to overcome the epistemological problems embedded in the context using information coming directly ‘from the ground’. But case studies are not only part of a process of knowledge accumulation about governance practices in the ‘illegal’ city, they are also used to contribute to theory generation in relation to the topic. Theory can come from a single case study through a process of generalization (Flyvbjerg, 2006), which depends mainly from the case study choice (here the research is built on ‘extreme’ and ‘paradigmatic’ cases).

¹⁰ Both informal and criminal organizations work outside legality, but they move in two different ethical and legal positions. Besides the evident differences in their moral condition, informal and criminal organizations are engaged in opposite ways by public authorities, including in relation to urban policies. Informal organizations (in this research we refer mainly to organizations which represent the community and work at the level of the settlement, although there are also *mandals* and networks working at higher levels) are recognized to varying degrees by public authorities, which can and/or should involve them and build joint strategies, projects and actions. Despite the official declarations of public authorities stating the rejection and fight against the criminal system (which are a constant in the rhetoric about Mumbai), this research shows the actual complexity of the relations between State and criminal organizations which are found in Mumbai’s un-recognized areas.

These organizations are often led by individuals who are not part of the community, are sometimes sought by the law, and are also linked to wider networks at city level and beyond which are identified as criminal by the State.

How this plays out in each case study settlement is described as follows.

Rafi Nagar 2 is a Muslim community that is located in the northeastern suburbs (M/East Ward); is composed of 600-650 households which arrived in Mumbai mainly from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal; and works mainly as rag pickers and informal vendors. The settlement is located near the Deonar dumping ground and a *nalla*, a channel collecting waste water. The precariousness of the habitat conditions is intensified by the scarce consolidation of the shelters (consisting mainly of tents or barracks made with plastic sheets), the lack of water and sanitation services (plastic water tanks and latrines; several facilities are located in other communities) and the problematic accessibility of a large part of the settlement [Fig. 1].

Figure 1. Examples of the urban environment in an illegal slum in Rafi Nagar 2, Fig.1 and Chikkalwadi, Fig.3) and in a pavement dweller community (Sai Leela, Fig.2).

The community has its own, recognized political structures (built on the social networks relating slum dwellers, extended families, community councils and community leaders) but key socio-spatial and planning decisions are taken by criminal organizations. Slumlords control access to land and housing, 'selling' portions of land for new constructions or renting shelters. Criminal organizations control also the provision of certain services, like electricity. Goods and 'protection' are given in exchange for money. Community organizations can plan interventions regarding accessibility and sanitation services. Water provision and other services (e.g. health) are provided through the action of 'intermediate institutions' (political parties and NGOs), which negotiate (or enable communities to negotiate) with the Municipality (main provider in these sectors).

Sai Leela is a Hindu pavement dweller community, located in the southern part of the suburbs (F/South Ward), along an avenue, leading to the Dadar station. The community comprises 30 households, coming from Maharashtra or other parts of Mumbai, and employed mainly in the construction sector. The settlement consists of a linear sequence of shelters or tents, using the wall separating the footpath from a formal residential area as a supporting element. The shelters are scarcely consolidated, this depending on the frequency of the demolitions affecting the settlement. Basic services and facilities are located in the formal neighbouring areas [Fig. 2].

Community institutions (characterized by a strong link between households and community leader) control access to land and housing, including the settlement rebuilding after demolition processes. Access to certain services, like electricity and water provision, is facilitated by community institutions while other facilities, including sanitation and health, depend directly on the households and are taken in the neighbouring areas, following formal channels. Relations with public authorities depend on intermediate institutions (in Sai Leela, mainly NGOs) or networks of pavement dweller communities (such as the Pavement Dweller Organization, PDO), which have the legal conditions to start a dialogue with the Municipality.

Chikkalwadi is a community of 2,000-3,000 households, both Muslim and Hindu, located in the Northeastern suburbs (M/East Ward), who arrived from Maharashtra, other Indian States and

Bangladesh. The urban environment is characterized by the Mankhurd-Ghatkopar link road and by the presence of a *nalla*, which tend to isolate the area from the rest of the fabric. The settlement is surrounded by formal resettlement projects (the Laloo Bhai Compound and the PMGP schemes) and the ‘notified’ part of the community (Annabhau Sathe Nagar). Chikkalwadi’s slum dwellers are mainly employed in occupations in the informal sector providing daily wages. Socio-economic conditions and political stability have allowed a certain consolidation of the habitat (metal sheet shelters) and a level of accessibility (paved paths) comparable with recognized slums. Part of the community is connected with the water supply network, while sanitation services consist of latrines on the *nalla* or are located in the ‘notified’ communities [Fig. 3].

The community is characterized by the presence of two institutional systems governing the territory. In the so-called ‘West Bengal ghetto’, which is located in the area near the *nalla*, slumlords control the access to land and housing and services provision (mainly electricity, while other services including water, health, etc. are available only in other parts of the community or in the formal neighbouring areas). In the rest of Chikkalwadi, a plurality of actors (‘big men’ linked to certain extended families, local associations-*mandals* or political parties) has a partial control of the territory, which is recognized only by limited groups of households. ‘Big men’ control access to land and housing in certain areas of Chikkalwadi, or services provision (i.e. water and electricity) for specific groups of slum dwellers.

Comparative analysis of the above cases allows us to understand key ‘de facto’ governance processes in Mumbai’s unrecognized settlements, which the paper turns to next.

THE GOVERNANCE OF UN-RECOGNIZED SETTLEMENTS: DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES AND RATIONALITIES IN PLANNING

The governance of un-recognized settlements is marked by the ‘official’ absence of public authorities (in contrast with the official spotlighted presence in the ‘recognized’ informal city). This formal absence is also a ‘negative presence’, actually constituting a strong political position on the un-recognized fabric of the city. This specific nature of public authority presence is the first condition for the development of alternative governance forms. This political context presents two dynamics: actors usually excluded from spatial-planning questions becoming the centre of the decision-making processes; the absence of public authority ‘protection’ and rules making visible the real power relations and obliging the actors in the arena to design new kinds of negotiation.

The case studies display two main governance systems¹¹. In areas under informal community organizations, the system is based on community leaders (Sai Leela) or ‘big men’ (part of Chikkalwadi). This institutional set-up is characterized by direct recognition and relation between community leaders and the social base of the community (slum dwellers and extended families’ representatives). The system involves a partial participation of slum dwellers in spatial-planning processes¹² and a consultative role for the community councils. Power relations are based on the

¹¹ The complexity of the Mumbai’s institutional context includes situations where continuity between these two governance systems is frequently visible.

¹² This participatory substratum is the basis for initiatives at other scales: for instance Sai Leela is involved in a network of pavement dweller communities, which represent a first step to other more articulated forms of community governance (Michelutti, 2014).

equilibrium between community leaders and extended families. All the actors have an interest in developing planning choices for 'collective' objectives while conserving power relations in place. Contrasts on spatial-planning issues and conflicts about political lines to be followed are resolved within the relations between community leader and extended families' representatives.

Extended families translate slum dwellers' felt needs into a priority agenda, which is carried out by community leaders [Fig. 4]. The execution of the agenda is in the hands of the community leaders, who relegate community councils or *mandal* into a secondary position, involving them only formally (in an operation of indirect control) or using them to extend consensus about key decisions among slum dwellers. Here, political parties and NGOs¹³ frequently orient decisions and policies on the territory, putting pressures on community institutions and working on the sphere of individuals and families. In the institutional set-up based on informal community organizations, criminal organizations remain an external factor and are not directly involved in spatial-planning decisions.

Decision-making processes in informal (Fig. 4) and criminal (Fig. 5) contexts. Basic steps of the process are shown in black boxes. Key actors in the process are in red. Important counterparts in the process are in black. Excluded or marginal actors in the process are in grey.

In the second form of governance found, i.e. in communities controlled by criminal organizations (Rafi Nagar 2 and the 'West Bengal ghetto' of Chikkalwadi), decision-making processes on spatial-planning issues are controlled directly by slumlords and their mediators through the so-called '*dada* rules'¹⁴ (Somaiya, 2002). The control of the mechanisms of decision and the relations between slumlords and communities follow top-down logics. From the slumlords' perspective there is no interest in involving extended families and slum dwellers in the process. The absence of participation and space for dialogue and the imposition of choices increase the stability of the slumlords' system on the community. For criminal organizations direct control of the territory becomes essential, in particular in relation to access to land.

Criminal organizations do not change the steps in decision-making processes [Fig. 5]. The main operation consists in depriving community organizations and leaders of authority. They lose their central role in the process and become just a representative of slum dwellers (as the members of any other *mandal*). The exclusion from the process of community organizations represents an instrument of slumlord control. This operation opens up a space for individual relations between criminal organizations and slum dwellers, which usually take place through mediators. The mental models embedded in the *dada* rules work at this individual plane: in absence of collective forms of

¹³ Frequently institutional overlapping is in place and the distinction between roles becomes questionable: community leaders can be also political party members or a community councillor can be a fieldworker for a local NGO.

¹⁴ '*Dada*' in Marathi, as similarly '*Bhai*' in Hindi, has become a keyword in the 'Bombayia' slang. It can be translated as 'brother', in the sense of 'chief' or 'Lord'. The expression '*dada* rules' becomes a label in defining the set of behaviours, actions and regulations imposed by the slumlords on the slum dwellers. *Dada* rules can differ a lot from slum to slum, depending on cultural background, mental models and power relations characterizing each context. In Rafi Nagar 2 for instance, *dada* rules include the 'purchase' of a lot of land or a shelter or in alternative the payment of the first period of 'protection', which becomes a sort of 'rite' for the newcomer slum dweller becoming part of the community (for details see Michelutti, 2014).

representation and social support-action (and the forced impossibility of building or participating to any kind of social movements), slum dwellers tend to rely on local ‘strong’ powers (mainly the *dada* of the community), who can offer impermanent solutions (in spatial-planning terms, mainly the provisional access to certain basic needs and services). In this context political parties and NGOs can enter just as a supporting actor, responding sporadically to specific needs at individual and family level, but are also excluded from consultative roles in decision-making processes and from the real possibility of developing long-term strategies and/or sectoral interventions.

THE TACTICS OF URBAN POWERS IN SHAPING RELATIONS BETWEEN COMMUNITIES AND PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

COMMUNITIES IN RELATION WITH THE MUNICIPALITY WITHIN INFORMAL POWER SYSTEMS

The findings from these three case study settlements show that communities of the ‘illegal’ city seek inclusion in formal city dynamics. This trend is a natural strategy for a community in vulnerable conditions. Inclusion can guarantee the existence of the community and a status of security brings improvements to habitat and services operated by slum dwellers. To achieve this objective, community organizations have to establish relations with public authorities, which are impossible through formal, legal negotiations. Community organizations use (NGOs) and are used by intermediate organizations (political parties) to build unofficial, underlying networks with the municipality. Starting from contacts provided by intermediate institutions, community organizations can obtain material interventions on the territory¹⁵ (funded with public resources, used by political parties and NGOs) or can suspend demolition processes¹⁶. The fact of ‘negotiating’ in itself is a key result for the community.

The community has an interest in being included in formal circuits, starting ‘virtuous circuits’ based on security in land tenure and gaining protection against other powers (criminal organizations), which are interested in controlling informal areas. Actually the inclusion of the ‘illegal’ city represents an ‘opportunity’ for several actors involved in ‘non-notified’ settlements:

- Private actors can extend their markets (in particular in the provision of services) in areas that in normal conditions are not favourable for investments;
- Political parties can put in place clientelist relations with community organization representatives (who frequently coincide with political party local members), changing the balance between political forces at the scale of the ward¹⁷;

¹⁵ This happens for instance with the provision of community plastic water tanks in Rafi Nagar 2. These services are installed with the support of political parties, developing a constant relation with the municipality and using this kind of intervention in exchange for votes or influence in community decision-making processes).

¹⁶ In Sai Leela, the frequency of the demolitions/evictions depends at least in part on the negotiations which the PDO and other NGOs can develop with the public authorities.

¹⁷ The obtainment of the right to vote represents a key passage for slum dwellers and community. The access to the first election is a step towards the involvement in formal circuits and the achievement of a certain security in land tenure.

- The municipality can keep ‘illegal’ areas controlled with a minimal effort, without using force (and resources) and taking any official compromise with the population and political parties, sustaining political equilibrium at city scale¹⁸.

Power relations are shaped by the variable interplay¹⁹ of interests in place. Two networks characterize governance forms: community leaders seek to enforce the relations with intermediate institutions (political parties and, on a second plane, NGOs) to limit possible actions by public authorities against the community and the worsening of negotiation conditions. The municipality uses its pressure on intermediate institutions (in terms of political balance with political parties; in terms of resource distribution with NGOs) to dictate the conditions of negotiation to community organizations.

COMMUNITIES IN RELATION WITH THE MUNICIPALITY WITHIN CRIMINAL POWER SYSTEMS

The case studies show that in communities under criminal power systems, slumlords preclude possibilities of dialogue between community organizations and municipality. Community organizations cannot orient policies towards inclusion (direct contacts with public institutions are precluded by the system) and the municipality is not interested in building negotiation in a territory which is not controlled by the interlocutor (community organizations are deprived of authority in decision-making processes). The achievement of the starting conditions for negotiation is complicated by the overlapping between criminal powers, community organization members and/or political party members, which questions the credibility of the interlocutors.

Criminal organizations have an interest in conserving the *status quo*. The exclusion of community organizations from formal circuits is a key condition to preserve power over the territory and maintain the role of obliged reference for slum dwellers to access land and services. Criminal organization interventions addressing exclusion involve intermediate institutions: political parties can operate in a territory under criminal control only through a connivance with these powers; NGOs and civil society associations are limited in their action (which cannot be developed at community level) and cannot influence dynamics related to spatial-planning issues. The lack of community policies which results from these dynamics entails the individual relations between slum dwellers and criminal organizations, and between slum dwellers and political parties. In this kind of relations, focused respectively on the exchange services-acceptance of authority and goods-votes, both the providers have an interest in enforcing the dependency of slum dwellers.

Power relations are marked by a condition of conflict between actors, which increase the social vulnerability of ‘illegal’ settlements. Criminal organizations impose their control on communities by force, the latter not being in a position to respond. Slum dwellers opt for any possible coping strategies and extended families end up searching for a compromise with (or accept totally) the rules imposed by criminal organizations (*dada* rules). This conflictive situation is also profitable for extremist political parties, which have found in this social context the appropriate conditions for their propaganda and member recruitment. From the perspective of many political parties, the need to change the power relations that are in place does not appear on the horizon.

¹⁸ This is the case of the right-wing Hindu parties in their policies against Muslim ‘illegal’ settlements.

¹⁹ The municipality for instance can be interested in implementing demolition activities for propaganda reasons.

CONCLUSIONS

Governance practices in Mumbai's un-recognized settlements put into question international agencies' principles. The discrepancy between the policy recommendations advocated by such agencies and the actual practices of the Mumbai public authorities is evident. The international agencies' approach is based on an idealised conceptualisation of key actors such as the state (purportedly representing an abstract 'public interest'), the market (providing services in the most efficient manner), and civil society (constituted by 'good' community organisations). The case studies show how urban governance is mostly driven by actors' interests and the conservation (or change, depending on the actor) of power balances represents the real political objective, despite other formal mandates.

In this context, the Municipality does not simply represent the public and general interest. It has the behaviour of any other actor in the arena, seeking the control of the informal city. Losing collective character in policies, the municipality follows its own interests and acts accordingly, protecting and/or advantaging economic and political powers, which sustain a political equilibrium inside the municipality. The public authorities do not necessarily represent the vehicle for inclusive policies (as it is for the formal city or for the recognized informal fabric) and, negating the right to the city for a part of the population, they increase exclusion dynamics.

The lack of official recognition and action by public authorities in 'illegal' areas opens the space for action by economic-political powers. The precariousness of rules in governance allows the use of force (and/or threats) and extending clientelist relations with slum dwellers and interests in goods and services provision. The weakening of collective forms in decision-making facilitates individualization processes (as shown by the communities under criminal power systems), which increase the vulnerability of un-recognized communities against urban powers. The exclusion from the formal city allows such powers to operate at the individual level without constraints (and offering no alternative for slum dwellers).

For 'illegal' communities, the recognition of their status and involvement in formal circuits are a necessary coping strategy. The two governance systems found in case study areas are the institutional answers which have emerged from the base to create the conditions for a political interaction, which includes the management of the territory. Both communities under informal power systems and communities under criminal power systems seek inclusion in city governance or at least the possibility of negotiating with public authorities. The establishment of underlying negotiations constitutes an achievement for community institutions (in this interplay of actors, intermediate organizations take on a fundamental role).

A reciprocal influence between power systems and slum dwellers' mental models characterizes the institutional context. Institutional mechanisms contribute to shape behaviours in relation to spatial/planning issues at the community scale and, at the same time, slum dwellers' mental models strengthen and make stable community institutional arrangements. Governance practices and decision-making processes take on an 'informal' character, which is characterized by overlapping of institutions and mutable balances of interests: recognising this condition is a basic requirement for strategies to improve living conditions in the 'illegal' city.

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Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

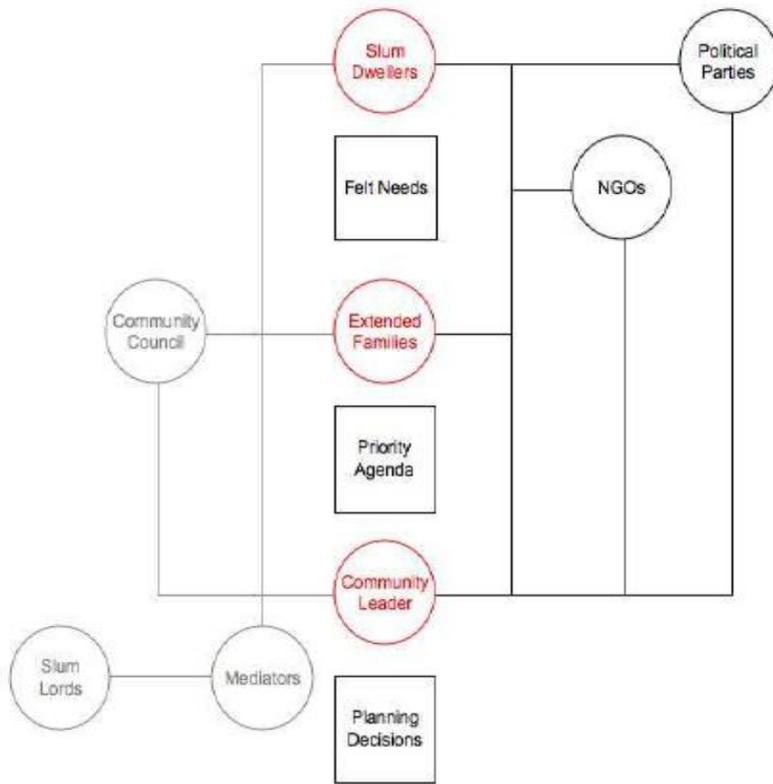


Figure 4

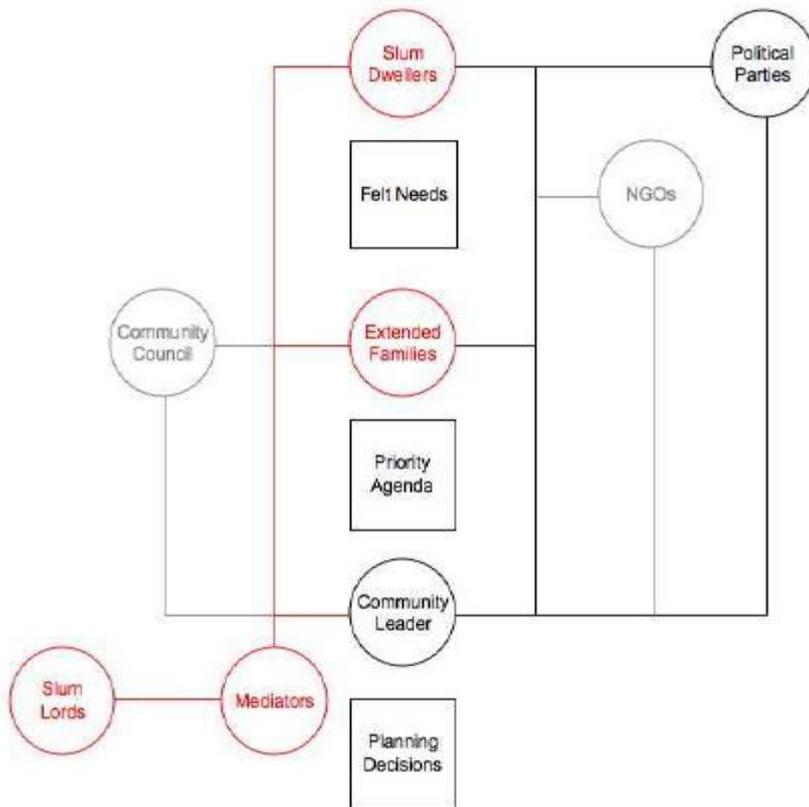


Figure 5